

# Scrapie Program Update

**Q: What is scrapie?**

**A:** Scrapie is a disease of sheep and goats that attacks their brains.

**Q: Where did scrapie in the United States come from?**

**A:** Scrapie came from sheep imported from England into the United States in 1947.

**Q: What kinds of animals get scrapie?**

**A:** Sheep and goats get scrapie. Mice and hamsters can be given the disease in the laboratory.

**Q: How did the disease get its name?**

**A:** Animals that have scrapie will rub on things and scrape off their wool or hair. This scraping is what gives the disease its name.

**Q: What do sheep look like when they get sick?**

**A:** Sheep that get sick with scrapie will do different things. Here is a list of symptoms to look for when sheep are sick with scrapie:

- Eat and eat and still get thin
- Itch all the time
- Pull out their wool
- Bunny hop
- Step high with their front feet
- Sway in back
- Rub on things a lot
- Bite at their legs
- Smack their lips
- Wobble or stumble
- Shake
- Jump at normal sounds
- Press their head on things for a long time
- Stare up at the sky
- Can't get up

**Q: Is there any cure for scrapie?**

**A:** No, there is not. Sheep that get sick with scrapie always die.

**Q: Can you tell if an animal has the disease right away, or do you have to wait awhile?**

**A:** Sheep that get scrapie are sick a long time. You have to watch them closely because they don't show many signs at first. You have to wait to see if they get worse. You used to have to wait for them to die and test their brains to tell if they had scrapie. Today, scientists are working on a new test so that you do not have to wait that long. Veterinarians can take a small part of the third eyelid and test it for scrapie. This new test, when validated, will give sheep owners help in finding and stopping the spread of the disease.

**Q: How do sheep get scrapie?**

**A:** Sheep get scrapie from other sheep or from where they have given birth. Scientists think that it is passed mostly during the birthing process.

**Q: How long does it take for the animal to get sick?**

**A:** It takes from 2 to 5 years for scrapie to make sheep sick.

**Q: What happens inside the animal?**

**A:** The disease can get inside through the mouth or broken skin. It then goes to the lymph tissues and to the brain.

**Q: What does scrapie do to the brain?**

**A:** Under a microscope, the brains of sheep with scrapie look as if they have "holes" in them, sort of like a sponge. Scientists call these "spongiform" changes.

**Q: How does scrapie make sheep die?**

**A:** Scrapie kills the sheep's brain cells so that the sheep cannot get up and eat and drink. Since the animal cannot do any of these things, it dies.

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